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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 008711

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SUBJECT: THE COMMUNISTS THREATEN THE UPA AGAIN OVER  
UPCOMING IAEA VOTE

REF: NEW DELHI 8681

Classified By: A/DCM Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (U) While addressing campaign meetings in Kerala on November 15 Communist Party of India (Marxist) General Secretary Prakash Karat and Communist Party of India (CPI)

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General Secretary AB Bardhan demanded that the GOI change its stance in the IAEA regarding Iran's nuclear program. Both men asserted that their parties would not "stand aside" on this issue and would oppose any GOI vote to refer Iran's nuclear program to the UNSC, and called on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to declare the GOI position before the November 24 IAEA meeting. Stating that India voted against Iran on September 24 only because of US pressure, Karat and Bardhan demanded that the GOI "repent" and "correct its stand" or "face the consequences." They confirmed that if the GOI again voted against Iran, the Communists and their regional party supporters would raise the issue in Parliament, but they refused to specify what else the Left was prepared to do. They expressed willingness to meet the PM in his capacity as Foreign Minister to discuss the upcoming vote in hopes of arriving at a consensus.

2. (U) This further salvo came as Iran reportedly canceled the scheduled visit to Delhi (reftel) by Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Safari.

Comment - The Left on a Roll  
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3. (C) The Communists have determined that the IAEA vote is a win-win issue for them, and seem determined to use it against the UPA. While they are unwilling to bring down the government, the Left repeatedly reminds the UPA that it does not enjoy a parliamentary majority and rules only with the Left's acquiescence. The Left Front (LF) is also crafting a loose coalition of regional parties willing to support it on the IAEA vote and other issues. The intent is to so isolate Congress, that it will feel compelled to back down. By bringing up the prospect of Left Front/Congress talks, the Communists are leaving the door open for Congress to take a face-saving way out of its dilemma. Should Congress decide on that option, the LF will trumpet the UPA turnaround as a major achievement and a sign of their growing clout. We keep urging the GOI to act again in their best national interest, just as it did in September on Iran at the IAEA Board of Governors Meeting. We are confident at this point that our concerns are being heard and that the Prime Minister has not yet decided how India will vote, if it comes to that, on November 24.

BLAKE